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A TIDES FAMILY SERVICES QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

The Wave

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ALL ABOUT KIDS ...AND THEIR FAMILIES



On the streets. In the homes. At the schools. Wherever kids are, Tides Family Services will be there. Since 1983, Tides Family Services has dedicated its mission to saving kids by keeping them in their communities through programs that inspire, educate, rehabilitate and preserve the family network.

Outreach and tracking — at the root of our programs — follows kids throughout their day. Around the clock — 365 days a year. No matter what the kid's problem. No matter how many times he/she fails. We never give up on a kid... never.

In this newsletter, we take a look at a few of the programs that are showing our kids and their families that somebody cares. Somebody listens. Somebody is reaching out with a helping hand.

Jaylin, a single mother, now boasts a near-perfect school attendance record thanks to the intervention of Tides' Preserving Families Network.



TIDES FAMILY SERVICES

OUR MISSION

is to provide high-risk youth with comprehensive, preventive services that promote personal growth and better connect them with their families and communities.

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PRESERVING FAMILIES NETWORK CHANGES LIVES OF FAMILIES

“I would tell any mother:
if your kids need help, go to Tides.”

IT IS 5 P.M. IN THE CITY. Alicia Capellan, Preserving Families Network (PFN) caseworker, is still on the job. This evening she will visit two clients and pick up another to bring him home from a break-dancing class at AS220.

SHAYLA ▶ Julissa and her daughter, Shayla, 15, greet Alicia at the front door of their home. A flat screen television, with the sound turned low, flashes cartoon images in the background as Julissa describes her experiences with Tides:

“Tides has changed my family’s life. I think that Tides is the best program there is. Shayla’s grades have improved. She and I talk together now, instead of arguing. I would tell any mother if your kids need help, go to Tides. They care about kids. they want to help them, instead of just locking them up.”

Accusations of fighting in school could have had Shayla traveling on a different road if the court had not referred her to Tides.

“They made me calm down,” Shayla says of her caseworkers. “I know that if I stay out of trouble, it will be so much better for me, and I like having people take an interest in me.”

JALIN ▶ Alicia’s next appointment is with 16-year-old Jalin. Pregnant at 14, and with a history of violent behavior, Jalin was referred to Tides through the court system.

Where once she sporadically attended school with a record of 88 recorded absences in one year — she now boards a RIPTA bus with her two-year-old son, and has a near spotless attendance record. “Jalin is so motivated to find work,” says Alicia. “She’s got her head on straight and knows that school is a priority.”

Preserving Families Network is a broad based program providing community-centered support. Currently serving 158 families, PFN has successfully diverted 94 percent of referrals from residential placement to community-based services. Young people are reunited with their families, fractured relationships are healed and kids are getting the education they need to make their way in the world.



Shayla with her mom, Julissa (top) and Tides Caseworker Alicia Capellan.

GIRLS FORM TIGHT BONDS IN NEWEST PROGRAM

TIDES' GIRLS GROUP — ONE OF THE AGENCY'S NEWEST PROGRAMS — was formed a few months ago in response to a need for teen girls to learn about healthy lifestyles and to explore self-esteem issues. According to the American Academy of Childhood and Adolescent Psychiatry, "...unhealthy weight gain due to poor diet and lack of exercise is responsible for over 300,000 deaths each year."

The Academy also noted that "the annual cost to society for obesity is estimated at nearly \$100 billion. Overweight children are much more likely to become overweight adults unless they adopt and maintain healthier patterns of eating and exercise."

The small group of teens — ages 14 to 17 — meets twice weekly at the West Warwick office and at the Kent County YMCA. The group quickly formed tight bonds over discussions that range from good nutrition to self-discovery.

"We learn about nutrition, but the group isn't about losing weight," says 16-year-old Brittany. "It's about getting healthy."

The girls record their food intake and express their feelings in journals. Activities that promote a healthy lifestyle are encouraged. "We have fun and what I like is that everything we talk about is confidential," says Whitney, 15.



Participants in Tides' West Warwick-based Girls Group.

At the core of the group is case-worker Casey Wilson. Not only does she facilitate the meetings, but she transports the girls to and from each session. "Sometimes the girls are not ready," Casey says, "or they forget I'm coming, but I will wait at their house until I get them in the car. I want these girls to understand the importance of being accountable to the group and be responsible to their commitment."

Evonna, 16, who had been missing in action for several weeks is proof of Casey's tenacity. "Casey brought me back into the group," Evonna says.

Speaking for the group, who smiled in agreement, Brittany adds, "Casey doesn't ask, she drags us."

The Girls Group is another example of how Tides' programs address the needs of children and their families and more importantly, shows kids that somebody will always be there for them... no matter what.

TIDES SCHOOLS OPEN DOORS TO THE FUTURE



KIDIAN ▶ Tides supervisor Angela Fischer has close ties with Kidian, 16. Angela worked with Kidian and her family through the Preserving Families Network's Multisystemic program. Kidian was also a part of the PFN Outreach and Tracking program. Although Kidian is a student in the Providence Tides School, she and Angela remain connected.

Kidian — a high school junior — is thinking about her future. "I graduate next year and hope to go to college. I want to be a special education teacher and work with kids," she says.

Her interest in special education comes naturally to her. Since elementary school, Kidian has struggled with spelling and reading. She has been in alternative schools for several years, the last three at Tides. "Before I came to Tides, my spelling and reading was all twisted up, but I've improved. I'm doing good," she says.

Kidian, who is one of 25 students in the Providence school, carries a full course of math, science, English and history. Math, she says, is her favorite because she likes to work with numbers. "I like the teachers and I feel comfortable here," she says.

A common thread among most Tides students is a deficit in literacy skills. As witnessed by Kidian's remarkable improvement, Tides' educational programs teach students to capitalize on their strengths, while minimizing their weaknesses.

REAL CONVERSATION STARTS WITH PIZZA

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAM ▶ One of the best ways to get a teenage boy to open up, advises Mike Schmitt, Outreach Program director, is to provide activity and feed them.

And on this day, seated around a table in a classroom at the Pawtucket/Central Falls site, three Tides kids dive into a cheese and pepperoni pizza. The youngsters are part of a new Conflict Resolution Program that brings kids together to solve problems rather than resort to violence.

“The program works because we are always there,” adds Mike. “Transportation is often a problem, but at Tides, if a kid can’t get to us, we’ll go get him.”

The group, which comprises about 10 boys from ages 14 to 18, meets weekly at the Pawtucket/Central Falls site, but as with all Tides programs, it goes far beyond a meeting room setting. Kids are tracked daily. Caseworkers advocate for their clients in the schools and courts, and they provide therapeutic counseling for families.

“What makes us different from other agencies,” says Mike, “is that we bring the program into the community because the issues they face in the streets are what got them in trouble in the first place.”

Charles Gibbs, Youth New Futures supervisor, coordinates the program, which, he says, is ever evolving.

“We are constantly reinforcing and reinventing ourselves,” he says. “We keep the program fresh by making sure it relates to the kids’ lives.”

A fast-paced work-out on the basketball court helps the kids reduce the stress that is often a motivator for violent behavior. Homework assignments teach the youngsters how to handle life’s sticky situations without resorting to violence.

And there is always pizza to help get the conversation started. “The kids know they can depend on us to always be there,” Charles says, “And when we can connect with them, they begin to open up.”



Pizza encourages peaceful exchanges in Tides Family Service’s new Conflict Resolution Program.

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